

End Medicare plan, which is completely accurate. But I'm going to give it another name today, Cut, Cap, and Continue Wars, because throughout the debate over the debt ceiling there's been an elephant in the room, if you'll pardon the expression, that hardly anyone is willing to acknowledge, and that is the impact of waging not one, not two, but three wars is having on our Nation's fiscal health.

Afghanistan alone is costing \$10 billion a month, with the total price tag for Iraq and Afghanistan, going back 10 years, \$3.2 trillion. And that's a conservative estimate, Mr. Speaker. These are staggering figures, especially during a recession when Americans are crying out for Washington to do something about creating jobs and breathing life back into our economy.

And what are the taxpayers getting for their trillions of dollars in war spending? More than 6,100 dead Americans, continued violence in Iraq and a Prime Minister who's cozying up to Iran, and an ongoing civil war in Libya, a corrupt regime in Kabul, insurgents that continue to kill at will, in Afghanistan a nation still under crushing poverty, and an Afghan Government that cannot protect its own people.

By any measure, these wars have been a devastating failure. And yet, with barely any scrutiny, barely any debate, and certainly no outrage from Republican leaders, we continue to write that check. Meanwhile, we have domestic programs that work, proven investments in the survival and prosperity of our people: Medicare, Social Security, Medicaid, school lunches, student loans, food stamps, unemployment insurance. But the majority says these programs have to be cut and capped so we can continue three wars.

Republicans want to cut programs that are keeping Americans alive while they want to continue funding the wars that have killed more than 6,100 Americans. It blows my mind, Mr. Speaker.

How about we ask the American people: Which do they prefer? These wars that have been failing us for 10 years or the guaranteed Medicare benefits that will allow them and their families to retire with dignity?

I ask my colleagues on the other side of the aisle: Do you really believe everything should be on the table? Everything? If you do, let's talk about war spending. And if you're really and truly serious about restoring fiscal sanity, where were you when the Congressional Progressive Caucus released a plan that will put us back in the black within 10 years?

The Congressional Progressive Caucus budget proves that we can balance the budget, but we don't have to amend the Constitution to do it. We don't need to shred the safety net to do it. We don't need to tear the heart out of Medicare to do it.

We can do it by bringing fairness back to the Tax Code, by ending subsidies, handouts, and giveaways to peo-

ple and corporations who will do just fine without them, we can do it by passing a clean debt ceiling and putting our people to work, and, Mr. Speaker, we can do it by ending these wars once and for all and bringing our troops home where they belong.

COLOMBIAN INDEPENDENCE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CANSECO) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CANSECO. Mr. Speaker, there are many concerns on the minds of Americans today. But there's one concern that dominates discussion in every coffee shop, grocery store, barber shop, civic clubs or everywhere else that Americans gather, and that is the need to turn our economy around and create jobs.

The American people are right to be concerned about the economy and jobs. We've had 29 straight months with the unemployment rate at 8 percent or higher, the longest streak since the Great Depression. Fourteen million Americans are unemployed, and month after month the jobs reports show anemic job growth.

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Over 2 years ago, the American people were told by President Obama and other Washington liberals that if we would just spend over \$1 trillion on the so-called "stimulus" bill, the unemployment rate would not exceed 8 percent. Well, in the entire Obama presidency there has only been one month—January of 2009—that the unemployment rate did not exceed 8 percent. Every month since the stimulus bill was signed into law in February of 2009 has seen unemployment rates at 8 percent or higher.

It is clear that the approach of attempting to spend and borrow our way to a better economy has not worked. That's why Congress needs to look to policies that will create jobs, like passing the three pending free trade agreements our Nation has with Colombia, Panama and South Korea.

Beyond the fact that the Business Roundtable estimates these agreements will create more than 250,000 jobs and are important for our economy, these agreements are also important to the United States' role in the world. There is no better illustration of this than the agreement we have pending with Colombia. Colombia is an important ally in Latin America, and I do say that today Colombians celebrate Colombian Independence Day. They're serving as an example for other nations and in stark contrast to the dictatorial regimes in Venezuela, Cuba and Bolivia. Colombia should not only enjoy a strategic relationship with the United States, we should also enjoy a strong commercial relationship. Passage of the free trade agreement would build upon the existing relationship and further strengthen it.

Apart from being beneficial for an important ally, this agreement is im-

portant for the U.S. economy. Here are just a few of the benefits that will occur with passage of the Colombia Free Trade Agreement: Duty-free access to the Colombian market for more than 80 percent of U.S. consumer and industrial goods, exports, with remaining tariffs phased out in 10 years; immediate duty-free access to more than two-thirds of current U.S. agricultural exports with the remaining tariffs phased out over time; strengthened intellectual property and investor protections; open services markets; and enhanced transparency in government procurement. However, perhaps the most important reason to pass this agreement is that if we don't, our competitors will.

Our competitors worldwide are aggressively moving to pass trade agreements. We have already seen our market share in Colombia jeopardized. For instance, although Colombia has doubled its agricultural imports over the past 5 years, the U.S. has seen its market share shrink by one-half. In 2008, American farmers held a 46 percent share of the Colombian market. Today, that share has diminished to 21 percent. In 2000, China was Colombia's 12th largest trading partner. Today, China is the second biggest trade partner for Colombia behind the United States.

Failure to pass the free trade agreement will allow our competitors to enjoy an artificial advantage. At this point in our economy, why do we not want to do everything we can to keep the jobs we have and create new ones? We need to put the politics aside and recognize the importance of the Colombia Free Trade Agreement, not only for our economy but for our strategic interests. It's time to pass the Colombia Free Trade Agreement.

GANG OF SIX AND CHAINED CPI

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFazio) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFazio. Well, yesterday the so-called "Gang of Six" on the Senate side—six very important Senators—unveiled sort of an outline about how to save \$4 trillion over the next 10 years. Immediately it was embraced by President Obama. We really don't know much about it, nor does he, but he immediately embraced it.

We know one thing about it. It contains something called a chained CPI. Okay. Well, who cares about a chained CPI? Well, seniors, they care a lot about a chained CPI; middle-income taxpayers, they care about it—they don't know it yet; veterans, and a whole host of other people.

What is a chained CPI? Well, the pointy heads, like Mr. Furman who work for President Obama, say we're understating and overstating inflation with the way we adjust. There is something called substitution effect. So when prices of things go up, you buy something cheaper, so that means

there isn't inflation. Well, no, wait a minute; the thing you used to buy is still more expensive and you're buying something else? But in the pointy-head economics world, this makes sense.

So let's say how this would work for someone on Medicare: Okay, you can't afford your heart bypass, so instead you'll say to the doc, "Hey, look, I can't afford the copay on the heart bypass. Why don't you do a hernia instead?" That's substitution. In Mr. Furman's world, this makes sense.

Now what this would do to seniors on Social Security, we already understate inflation. Seniors haven't gotten a COLA for the last 2 years. Tell me the price of prescription drugs and medical care hasn't gone up over the last 2 years. We need, in fact, a different measure for seniors, for Medicare, for our veterans and others who consume more health care and more essentials, which the CPI doesn't measure. It just measures junk that people buy. That's all it measures. And they're saying because people buy cheaper junk, we should change the CPI. That means the senior, by the time they reach 85 in this brave new world of the chained CPI, will get 100 bucks less a month in their Social Security—not too good. Veterans would see their benefits also be restrained and go down about the same amount.

And then there is this other little impact they're not mentioning. If you're earning \$20,000 a year, the tax brackets get adjusted every year. Well, they wouldn't get adjusted so much anymore under the chained CPI. So someone who earns \$20,000 a year over 10 years would see their taxes go up 14 percent, but for the rich people, you earn \$500,000 a year, you're already at the top; their taxes will only go up .3 percent, three-tenths of 1 percent. Fourteen percent for someone who earns \$20,000 a year; .3 percent for someone who earns \$500,000. And Obama has embraced this?

What's happened down there at the White House? They're listening to these pointy-head economists, and they're going after programs that are important to the American people. All of this, all combined of this great "Gang of Six," would save \$4 trillion over 10 years. That is, seniors will pay more, working people will pay more, veterans will pay more—rich people, not so much—but it would save \$4 trillion. Guess what? If we let all the Bush tax cuts expire at the end of next year—all of them, and the stupid Social Security tax holiday—that would be \$5 trillion over 10 years and we wouldn't have cut Social Security, we wouldn't have cut veterans benefits, we wouldn't have asked low-income and middle-income people to pay more in taxes. Now does that make more sense? I think so.

Let's hope they rethink this down at the White House, and I hope the American people are watching closely.

CUT, CAP, AND BALANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. MORAN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MORAN. Last night, we were asked to amend the Constitution, after two-and-a-quarter centuries, in a way that will permanently limit the ability of our government to foster competitiveness in a global economy, to generate greater equality of opportunity, to treat our seniors with dignity and respect, and to defend and define this great Nation as an ever-shining democratic beacon of hope and prosperity.

So I was proud to vote against the Cut, Cap, and Balance Act. It is the House Republicans' vision for America's future. This is a vision in which the country turns its back on the achievements of the last century and chooses not to invest in meeting the challenges of the next century.

Republicans aim to use a crisis of their own making to hamstring future Congresses, limiting our ability to make necessary infrastructure investments, to care for the poor, aged and disabled, and to respond to national and international crises.

The 18 percent spending cap mandated by the bill would return the government to spending levels not seen since the establishment of Medicare and Medicaid. The impending retirement of more than 70 million baby boomers means that these spending levels are woefully inadequate, unless we condemn our grandparents to a severely diminished quality of life.

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The Republican Party would enshrine constitutional protections for tax cuts and loopholes for wealthy individuals and corporations, requiring an unattainable two-thirds majority in both the House and the Senate for the government to increase the currently unsustainably low revenue levels of roughly 15 percent of GDP.

This would necessarily result in unprecedented cuts in student loans and grants, transportation, education, environmental protection, law enforcement—in other words, the physical and the human infrastructure of our economy.

The only budget plan that comes close to meeting the requirements of these constitutional amendments is the Republican Study Committee budget which eliminates 70 percent of non-defense discretionary funding by 2021, contains deep cuts to Medicare, cuts Medicaid, food stamps, supplemental security income for the elderly and disabled and poor in half by the end of the decade, and raises the Social Security retirement age to 70 years of age.

Yesterday's vote means that the Republican majority is demanding that in return for avoiding an economically disastrous default on our debt, we make \$111 billion in immediate spending cuts. These cuts seriously increase the likelihood of a double-dip recession. It is estimated that they could

cause the loss of more than a million public sector jobs just in the next year alone.

Last month, the economy added an anemic 18,000 jobs; but the private sector added 57,000 jobs, while 39,000 public sector jobs were lost in addition to the 49,000 public sector jobs lost in the prior month. This is a continuing trend. Half a million public sector employees have now lost their jobs, 200,000 of them teachers, while student enrollment has increased by 750,000. Firing more government workers will only decrease aggregate demand, making it that much harder to sustain the recovery.

We have witnessed this before. In 1937, President Roosevelt responded to similar conservative pressure by substantially reducing Federal spending before the Great Depression was fully in the rearview mirror. It drove us right back into economic depression. The economy wouldn't recover until the increased spending and hiring that accompanied the World War II armaments buildup got the country moving again. After the war, spending on education and housing for our GIs, the Marshall Plan for Europe, and the construction of the interstate highway system established a permanent middle class and sustainable prosperity.

This is not the time for the Democratic Party to sacrifice our values, values held by a majority of the American people, even in the face of opposition that has reached unprecedented levels of ideological radicalization.

We have to address our long-term deficits for the sake of future generations, but we must do so in a balanced manner, combining rational spending cuts and increased revenue. That's what has worked in the past. That's what we need to do now. We must not abandon the people that depend upon the government for a decent quality of life, but we must not let this great Nation become a second-class society and a third-rate economy. If the bill that was passed last night were to be enacted into law, that's the limited vision it would yield. That's why I was proud to vote against it.

WIC ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. FARR) for 5 minutes.

Mr. FARR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to clarify a mischaracterization of the administrative costs of the supplemental nutrition program for Women, Infants and Children, commonly known as WIC.

It's interesting, you can come down here to the floor or speak in committee, and we are protected as Members of Congress to say anything we want. It isn't required that everything we say is factually correct. Sometimes those mischaracterizations, misstatements get into the record. And in this case, the complaint or the statement in subcommittee and full